

## Messenger and Visitor

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### A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

#### The Christian Ground of Optimism.

Since we last addressed our readers the line has been passed, which, in our enumeration of time, marks the beginning of a new year. The line that divides the years is of course an arbitrary and imaginary one. There is nothing in the course or the aspect of nature to distinguish the new from the old. We please our fancy by picturing the year the days of which are nearly numbered as an old man with hoary locks, decrepit and outworn, and its successor as a lusty boy full of youth's vitality and hope. But really, of course, time never grows old. It holds the secret of perpetual youth. Each day as it comes is a new day, fresh from the fountain of eternity. The last day of December may have as bright a sky and be as full of hopeful, strenuous life as the first day of January. It is just as important that men and women live pure, truthful, honest, faithful lives in the end of the old year as in the dawn of the new, and there is never a month or a day of the year in which we do not need God's mercy and His protecting care. There is never a time for the unlit lamp and the unglit loin. To those whose spirits respond to the highest ideals life must be always real, always earnest. Not indeed that the man who seeks the highest things is therefore morose and grim of temper. On the contrary the man who lives a life of earnest purpose, who tramples base ambitions and hurtful lusts beneath his feet, keeps the true goal in view and chooses the noblest fellowships, does thereby attain to a life of unflinching hope and purest joy. No pilgrim sings in so glad and triumphant strains as he who knows that he is on the King's highway with his face set toward the Celestial City.

But we would not be understood as saying that it is not wise to measure time by years or to take account of those waymarks which we call new year's days. To make our year begin just where it does in the calendar may be quite an arbitrary procedure, but the revolution of our planet round the sun, which really determines the length and succession of those periods which we call years, is not arbitrary, but has its reason in the nature of things. And a few years at most—that is to say a few revolutions of the earth around the sun—measure the period of a human lifetime. If one compares the brief years of even the longest living man with the countless millenniums during which the earth has been spinning on its axis and whirling on its orbit round the sun and those other countless millenniums in which it may yet go spinning and whirling on, how ephemeral a thing seems a human lifetime upon the earth! It is as if man but touched the world's life, as the skimming swallow touches the water, and he is gone. And when one thinks that this whirling planet had a beginning and is likely to have an end, and that, however many millenniums apart that beginning and end may be, yet the whole period embraced is less than a drop in the ocean compared with God's Eternity, the sense of the littleness of man and of his day is overwhelming. Well might the Hebrew prophet compare the life of men to the withering grass and the fading flower, well might the psalmist cry, "Lord what is man that thou takest account of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?"

But small as man seems and brief as his day upon the earth, it is impossible for him to escape the conviction that he is himself greater than this whirling world in which he finds birth and sepul-

ture. He is lord of the world, and though the inheritance has to be conquered, he has the ambition and the determination to assert his lordship. Heedless of Death and his mortal shafts, man makes his way onward and upward toward dominion. Though long successive generations he wonders and works, guesses and experiments; falls and rises, blunders and succeeds,—every generation falling in its fight with Death, but each carrying the race on somewhat toward its goal. The individuals fall, the generations pass, but in this unwearied persistence of the race in the struggle with the great Enemy, there is the prophecy of final victory. Surely this weak creature man, coming upon the stage of life so helpless and departing so soon, has done wonderfully in the world. He has achieved much. He has asserted dominion in many realms. He has harnessed the forces of nature to his triumphal car, and rides forth as a king in the earth. He has even invaded the territory of the king of terrors, carrying on much successful warfare against disease and disaster.

But what chiefly and supremely gives significance to man's life, and constitutes its surest prophecy of final victory and dominion, is not the long, persistent struggle against adverse circumstances, nor the power exerted over physical nature and brute life, nor the enlarged domain of knowledge—the cultures of art and of literature and all the glory of a twentieth century civilization. The fact that gives its supreme significance to human life on earth is that there has been granted to man the vision of a deathless One, who is the Lord and the Redeemer of the world, and that some who have ears to hear have heard a sure promise of eternal life. Long ages ago this vision came to men as a supreme inspiration, to lift their thoughts and aims above the things which perish. It enabled the Hebrew psalmist, when pressed down under a sense of the brevity and vanity of human life, to cry, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." It was the rising of a morning star which heralded the sun through which life and immortality were to be brought to light for the world. There was a clearer vision of the Deathless One, a larger revelation of immortality, when the Lord Christ came and fought out on man's behalf the great decisive battle with sin and death. And now, though the shadows of death still hang about man's habitation, and though we see not yet all things put under him, yet we "see Jesus," the champion and representative of the race, "crowned with glory and honor," and in this we have the pledge of triumph and of blessing for the race, and the solution of the enigma of human life on the earth.

What then is the ground of hope for the world? What is the justification of an optimistic spirit for the new year and for all the years that are to be? It is that name "Immanuel," the assurance that God is with men, that the Son of God has identified Himself with our humanity, and has espoused our cause. He has revealed His character in the Cross of Calvary. He has written His name upon the hearts of men. *In hoc signo vinces.* It is not by the strength of human arms, the might of human intellect, the loftiness of human imagination, the invincibility of human will, that the world shall fulfill its high destiny and the race of men win its inheritance. It is by the love and the life that made the cross a symbol of redemption and victory, the love and the life shed abroad in human hearts surrendered to the lordship of Jesus. Here is the power that shames and conquers sin, that defies and vanquishes death. It is this that justifies the largest optimism for the individual life and for the world. It is in the name of Christ and in His name only, that we can with the profoundest sincerity and confidence, wish men a Happy New Year; it is in His name, and in His name only, that we can expect ultimate triumph and perfect well-being for mankind.

#### Editorial Notes.

—In noting that the *Religious Intelligencer* has completed fifty years of life, our neighbor, the *Sun*, remarks that at the time the *Intelligencer* was started there was no religious paper in New Brunswick. We hope the *Sun* does not mean to impugn the religious character of the *Christian Visitor* in its early days, for according to our reckoning the *Visitor* began its existence fifty-three years ago.

—Recent despatches from Peking and other points in the far East indicate an unsettled and ominous condition

of affairs in some Chinese Provinces. In the Province of Shensu matters are reported to have assumed so threatening an aspect that missionaries in the capital city, Sian-fu, have been officially notified to be prepared to leave if necessary. It is advised that women and children be sent to safe ports. The source of apprehension appears to be a General Tung fu Slang who is opposed to the administration and who, with ten thousand men under his command, is disposed to give trouble.

—We are glad to learn through a private note from our esteemed brother, Rev. H. Morrow, of Tavoy, Burma, that both he and Mrs. Morrow are enjoying good health. Mr. Morrow says: "I have not been so well for many years and Mrs. M. is much better than when she left Boston three years ago. We work all day and every day, and keep going. Quite a number of our pupils will be baptized the first Sabbath in December our work is fairly prosperous." Mr. Morrow makes tender and regretful mention of the death of Rev. Ralph Hunt. He recalls the last time he met Mr. Hunt. It was in Tremont Temple, and while talking with him one of the older pastors of Boston came along and said, "Brother Hunt, we love you." "I think," says Mr. M., "this was the feeling of all who knew him."

—The editor of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR desires to express his grateful sense of the very kind words of encouragement received from some friends and readers during the past week. Such expressions should stimulate him to render the best service of which he is capable. If all the kind allusions of a personal character, which have been written for the paper, do not find their way into its columns, these friends will not mistake our motives. The help which comes through long and constant support and brotherly appreciation is valued beyond all estimate, and we know that the kind words written us are not intended to minister to a love of praise or to a personal reputation, but to hearten the editor for faithful service. These words of encouragement are all the more appreciated at the present time, because the editor is facing the new year with no reserves of physical strength beyond the weekly and daily demands of his work. May he hope that the readers of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR will pray that in every way strength may be granted him according to the importance of the ministry committed to his hands.

—It is announced that Rev. J. A. Macdonald, editor of the *Westminster* and the *Presbyterian* has accepted an invitation to become the editor of the *Toronto Globe*. Certainly it speaks well for the *Globe* that it should desire to secure such a man as Mr. Macdonald as its editor-in-chief, and no doubt that paper and its readers are to be congratulated. But so far as Mr. Macdonald is concerned we do not feel so sure. No doubt the editorship of a great daily paper like the *Globe* affords a field of commanding influence and wide usefulness to a man of Mr. Macdonald's eminent talents, but as editor of the *Westminster* and the *Presbyterian* he had already such a field, and one cannot but wonder whether in the role of the political journalist, a man of Mr. Macdonald's gifts and callings will not inevitably find himself a good deal hampered in respect to the expression of his most vital thoughts and the achievement of his highest ideals. However, there is no place where men of the highest ideals and aims are more needed than in the political sphere. We sincerely regret the loss that will be sustained by Mr. Macdonald's withdrawal from the field of distinctly religious journalism, but knowing that he has a brave heart and a strong hand, we are sure that his influence will tell powerfully for good in the new field into which he is about to enter.

—There is evident on the part of some of our pastors a deep sense of the need of a general and thorough work of grace in our churches. Some have addressed the readers of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR in reference to this matter, and doubtless many who have not written are feeling strongly the importance of what has been said. Last week Pastor Ganong called attention to the movement of the New York State Baptists toward co-operative effort in evangelistic work, with special seasons of prayer, and sermons on the importance of a deeper spiritual life on the part of Christians and of personal effort on behalf of the unsaved. It may not be practicable to name any day on which our churches throughout these Provinces would unite in humiliation and prayer for spiritual blessing, but the need is sufficiently evident, and where there is a willingness on the part of any individual church to be led by the Spirit, or of any two or more churches to co-operate in evangelistic work, as some have already been doing, gracious results may be expected. So far as any organized effort is necessary the Quarterly Meetings would seem to afford a favorable opportunity for a number of contiguous churches and their pastors to act together.

—In connection with the above we may note that the *Watchman* of Boston had an editorial article last week, under the heading "Is a Great Revival coming?" The *Watchman* alludes to the very general interest in revival work now prevailing among the Bap-